

# International Centipede Day

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A Quinton Quads short story

“I bet there’s never been an International Centipede Day,” Em suddenly said, but her three sisters didn’t respond. “I mean, you get international days or world days for cats and elephants and such. Why not for centipedes?”

The quads were in the middle of Bee Meadow, as they’d named the boulder-strewn field a few years earlier, enjoying a few peaceful moments in the long grass. Sally, the eldest by about five minutes, was reading a book with her back against Big Rock and totally engrossed with it. Caz was atop the rock with a plastic sword, practicing for the day they came across a band of bloodthirsty pirates. Poppy sat cross-legged with a sketchbook and pencil, drawing the ox-eye daisies. And Em lay on her belly with a notepad, taking notes as she watched the actions of a centipede through a magnifying glass.

Em sat up and looked at the others. “Don’t you think that’s odd? Unfair, even.”

Caz made a slash with her sword. “Who cares about that! I’d rather there was a World Pirate Day.”

“There is,” Poppy said without taking her attention from her drawing. “Well, there’s International Talk like a Pirate Day.”

“Ooh, yeah.” Caz grinned and jumped down from the rock, pointing the sword at Poppy. “Arr, matey. Be ready to set sail or we’ll miss the tide. Arr.”

Poppy gave Caz a look and a sigh. “It’s not until September the nineteenth.”

“Us real pirates talk like this all the time,” Caz replied. “Arr, matey.”

“Keep talking like that and you’ll end up with a sore throat,” Em said. She sat up with the centipede in her hand and watched as it ran around on its many legs. She popped it into a jar she had nearby and screwed on the lid.

“Is that one of the jars Mum uses for making jam?” Caz asked. “You’ll be in trouble when she finds out.”

“There weren’t any spare jars, only her jam ones,” Em explained. “I’ll wash it out when I’m done.” She brought the jar close to her face and stared at the small creature then she opened the top again and put in a couple of leaves and a few stalks of grass.

“Centipedes are carnivorous,” Sally suddenly said, slamming her book closed after finishing the chapter she was reading. “They eat soft-bodied insects.”

“How gross,” Poppy declared and made a face. “I hope you’re not going to put insects in the jar for it to eat.”

Em looked closely at the centipede again then opened the jar and tipped it out into the long grass.

“Maybe it’s better to let it live a natural life.” The centipede scurried away.

“What about International Centipede Day?” Sally asked.

Em shrugged. “Maybe there’s too many of those kind of Days.”

“Arr, matey,” Caz shouted. “Let’s be off to Smudgin Beck to play pirates.” Her coarse piratey voice suddenly made her cough and the others laughed. After a moment she got it under control and smiled, but there were tears in her eyes from the exertion.

Sally jumped to her feet. “Last one there’s a scurvy landlubber!”

A second later they were all running through Bee Meadow towards the Forest of Doom. Thoughts of centipedes had vanished from their minds.



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